HAZARA WOMEN AND SOCIETY

In the central Hazarajat till the year 1880, there was no central government the rich landlords and the influential of the area were independently ruling their respective areas. these rulers were known by the titles of Mir, Khan, Sultan, Torak Khan, Qul Ikhtiar etc. the highest title was Mir' which means the ruler or the leader. the rulers of Dai \angi, Dai Kundi and were titled as Mir. [7]

The rich contracted many marriages and had large families e.g. Mir Ulqan, Mir Mohammad Raza Baig's family compromised of 70 members. The wives of the Mir,s who also belonged to the family or from the family of another Mir, played active role in the social and political, life of the Mir. The wives were given the title of Agha. The wives at times expressed their views and gave advice on social and political issues. Very often they dressed up as men and participated in the wars.

The rich rulers often displayed their riches in order to show the masses their superiority. They would exhibit their household objects and wear ostentatious clothes and jewellery. Their swords were unique and their houses were of rare breed, decorated with silver and gold.

The wives of the rich rulers wore highly expensive clothes especially on Eid festival and other ceremonies. On their daughters lavish weddings. They received highly expensive gifts. [8]

HANDICRAFT:

The Hazara women are known for making high quality gloves and scarfs (muffler) To impose their goods further, they dyed them in different colours' using both artificial and natural colours. They also used brush to pain on them. According to J.P Ferriar, the Hazara women were so skilled in their crafts that the rich Iandlords of Iran and Afghanistan made their dress Barak, using the fabric/cloth made by the Hazara women.

According t E.F.Fox an American:

I had always heard that the Hazarajat is the place to find good Afghan felt, and since I wanted some, I was watching for it in the villages that we passed through. I saw some very fine pieces in the villages near Waras Pass and tried to buy

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[7] Tarikh-e- Milli P. 57

[8] Tarikh-e- Milli Hazara P. 62-63

them, but the villagers assured me that I would see much better in the bazar of Panjao we were told that the best felt is available in billages near Unai Pass, and when the villagers of that place were asked for felt, they said that the very best place to find good felt was back near Waras Pass.

According to Hassan poladi:

In general, Hazara jat industry remained dormant, individual Hazarajat valleys became famous for specific handicrafts. Notable crafts which were in demand outside their land were fabrics made out of sheep, camel and goat hair. One such type of fabric was known as Barak-e Barai, i.e. Barak made out of lamb's wool, which is famous for its fineness and soft texture. During,19th century it was in great demand in the neighbouring countries. Besides this, Barak made out of camel hair, known as Barak-e Shutori, was also in great demand. Fabrics made of goat hair by Hazaras were considered matchless in beauty and value in the surrounding countries.

The finer and cleaner wool was mostly saved for making fabrics such as baraks, blankets, jackets, top coats, trousers, and carpets. The remaining coarser wool and goat hair were used for making different products of lower value such as felts, sacks for transportation and storage, and ropes. Hazarajat, in the past, was also famous for its fine quality carpets, but no longer produces them. Instead, much attention is given to producing rugs (Gelim) and felts (Nemad). Trade and indebtedness with nomads have forced the Hazaras to produce as much as the nomads demand, and they are thus the exclusive buyers of these products. Those Hazaras who are in debt to the nomads do weaving for them. Others are paid by nomads for their services. Under these arrangements, the nomads provide the raw materials,and the Hazara women do the manufacturing . [9]

In Hazara the women worked throughout the year. They however enjoyed no recreation facility. They cooked, stitched and looked after the children. They also milked the animals and cleaned the house. In addition to the domestic chores they joined men in agricultural activity. In their spare time, they stitched clothes, made caps and Barak.

In this connection Mohammad Hayat Khan Afghani writes.

> "The Hazara women are fully conversant with the art/skill of carpet weaving, Barak making, cap, gloves, rug making, and in dying , stitching of clothes plus cooking. With Lamb wool they make fine threads. They excel in making horse bridle/saddle etc.

According to Moseantoche, a French "In each hazara house, there

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[9] The HAZARAS P. 399

is a small factory, where a woman is seen weaving cloth or carpet with very find lamb wool.

Syed Jamal ud Din Afghani writes about the Bark'"such fine fabric can rarely be seen in europe."

Yaqoob-A.D.Writes'
karak which is made of a kind of wool, is fine and soft fabric called Bark. It is soft durable and warm, but the best quality Bark is made in Afghanistan by Hazara tribe. [10]

Arminos Vambri Writes:
One traders have purchased Pistachio and Bark in large quantity. Bark is soft cloth made by the Hazara women. The people living in the north of Iran and Afghanistan made coats called "cheen" from this high quality fabric. They also make jackets caled Gilin, shawls, rugs, gloves, socks and caps. the items which are made today do not have the same quality as in the past.

Among the few Hazara women well known for their craft and skill, Gul Bahar is one.

Meerza Gul Bahar: was the daughter of Khuda Bash who belonged to a poor family of village Lali in district waras, Ulswali. SHE received religious education. She learnt the art of calligraphy, against the wishes of her father and later mastered the art.

She wrote 15 copies of "Hamla Haidri"in a few years. By selling these, she earned her livelihood."Mirza" is a title given to good calligraphers. She came to be known as Mirza Gulbahar. She later got married and went to Kabul. She lived till 1356 Hijri.

Hazara women also

CONCLUSION:-

When we look back at the past achievements of Hazara women, we realize how actively they participated in achieving political, cultural and economic progress in the country. In the entire history of Afghanistan no such example can be found. Keeping the past achievements in view, it can be hoped that the women of this can also play the same kind of role in their country. In the light of the glorious past, their talents and skills can be utilized.

It is agreed that the role of the Hazara women in the past was mainly that of an advisor, or a manager. It was only the women of rich and influential families who participated

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[10] Tarikh-e- Tashayoo Afghanistan P.125-124

in the political and social lives, alongwith their husbands or brothers. Similarly the participation of women in the battle field was also restricted to the women belonging to the ruling elite.

As regards the Hazara women's skill in making Bark,Carpets , rugs shawls, socks leather goods, the same have now become extine. Besides these items were valved only in Iran, Turkistan and Afghanistan.

Their interest in calligraphy has died, although today as compared to the past the literacy rate among women is high. If today the women are educated, not only the women but also their children would be healthy and useful in the society.

Hazara women also specialize in leather work Being agricultural people, leather is used for many purposes. Special products are leather bags, saddles, belts, harnesses, and covers for guns and rifles. From leather, Hazara men make their shoes, and all leather tanning is done by them.
Women also specialize in handmade pottery. One unique feature of Hazara pottery is the way it is made. They do not use a pottery wheel only their hands, with great skill. However, with the appearance of the wheel this technique is rapidly disappearing. Prince Peter of Greece and Denmark, who observed the Hazara women making earthen jars without the use of wheels in the village of Garm-Ao,Dai Zangi, described it:

"The material used was local clay mixed with water, no gritor straw temper being employed. These jars were extremely plain, with no decoration to them at all. The method used to build them up consisted of making small clay sausages with the hands and thenlaying these one upon the other to form the outer wall. The handles were made in the same way. The surface was then smoothed with the fingers. While smoothing the clay, water is continuously used.

Because of their primitiveness and rough structure, these earthen jars have no commercial value and are used exclusively by the Hazara villagers. Each village produces enough earthen pottery to be self sufficient.

Mohammad Ali Gulzari
Quetta.

Feb. 1994.

WOMAN LEADERS OF HAZARAJAT

FOREWORD

This booklet has been written to draw attention to the important leadership and community management role that women have played in Hazarajat, both historically and in the recent past. Too often, we remember only the work that women do in producing children and management the household. Women in Hazarajat make their contribution to production : they look after the animals, they produce handicrafts and they work in the fields to weed and harvest the crop. It is also a port of the culture and history of Hazarajat that women have played a role in making decisions about their community and in leading their people in peace and war./ In modern times, people are again wondering about the role of women. Organizations are working for the development of Hazarajat, to over come its historical poverty and backwardness. Such development work is most successful when the people, in any village that want to overcome their poverty,form themselves into a group and manage all this way, they control the process and can ensure that development work addresses their own felt needs projects themselves. Women also have a right to participate in development. If they decide to do this by farming and managing their own committees then they are doing no more then what has been traditional for their sisters for centuries. The women leaders described in this book provide positive role models for the women of today. the booklet is based upon historical sources and upon interviews that were undertaken by Mohammad Ali Gulzari during his Daizangi December 1993. It is intended to be of interest to community leaders and scholars in Hazarajat, and all those interested in the development of the region.

Michael semple
April 1994.
Islamabad.

WOMEN LEADERS OF HAZARAJAT

Introduction:

Progress can be achieved only wheneach member of the society performs his duty. In different parts of the world people have different ways of living. There are people who lead a comfortable and easy life and then are those who are faced with poverty and drudgery. There are many ways by which poverty can be eradicated. But no policy be effective unless the people who are faced with the problems, themselves come forward and collectively participate in projects being undertaken for their betterment. No project or plan can success fully be completed unless and until it has the support of the target group itself.

It is the wish of every group or area to lead a free and respectable life. To achieve this end those who strive and work sincerely with a missionary zeal are remembered. They become legendry figures and remain alive in the hearts of the people through folk love etc.

In the Central Afghanistan/Hazarajat also many people worked hard for the welfare of their homeland. Women of this area have also played very effective role in the past and have now become legendry figures. The women contributed not only in their domestic duties e.g traditional embroidery Agriculture, livestock calligraphy, politics social welfare but have also earned fame in the battle fields by fighting shoulder to shoulder with men folk. Their achievements are remembered till date in the stories/folk tales.

During the past 15 Years, Afghanistan has faced external and internal wars, which have resulted in giving a compete blow to its social, cultural aspects of life. Their natural resources and the Afghans including the women would have to strive hard. Women's participation in nation building is extremely essential.

In the central Hazarajat, there are sufficient resources available, but what is needed is the community participation for effective utilization of these resources.

In this regard OXFAM's programme in the region is successful because it has the support/corporation of locals.

Women form the half of any nation and their position in a society is determined by the national, economic and cultural aspects of that society. It would be appropriate to say that the status of women is determined by their men. In some societies women enjoy equal status with men, but to achieve this they have had to struggle a lot.

The human society is a combination of men and women and their

joint struggle. Not only women are responsible for procreation, they have also contributed otherwise in development of the society.

In the days of antiquity, it was the women who planted seeds in the soil and grew plants etc. Whereas the men folk went out for hunting.[1]

Like other continents, in Asia, particularly in South East Asia and Central Asia, there have been examples of women whose names are now part of the history. In the developed countries, women's role in achieving progress has been recognized, but in the developing countries, they have not been given their rights and their contribution/achievements are not given due recognition. If the potential/capability of half of the nation is not utilized and is suppressed, then it is a loss for that nation.

According to Vale Diorite:
In the beginning of human society, the economic development was started by women. The menfolk still used their tools for hunting. It was the woman who started agriculture. She made ropes and later made cloth. It was she who created social life by introducing manners, traditional customs and rites, thus she brought civilization itself.[2]

In our society especially in Pakistan and Afghanistan, the potential of our women has not been fully utilized. In fact they have been suppressed under the garb of religion culture, customs and traditions.

According to Plato - Men and women are like the right and left arms. As we use the right arm more frequently, its performance is also better.[3]

The Women of Afghanistan:

Like many other countries of the world the women of Afghanistan have also been denied most of their basic rights. They can not take independent decisions about their own future. Education is also almost exclusive for the men, as it is thought unnecessary for women. Not only men but women also believe that women are inferior to men. The common proverbs/sayings in this regard are:

"Woman is mentally inferior and is a (*)

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[1] Tarikh-e- Tashayoo Afghanistan P.

[2] Tarikh-e-Tashayoo Afghanistan P.

[3] " " " " " P.

"She has no right to interfere in what the men do"

"If she is consulted in a case, the men should act contrary to her advice"

"Her opinion should not be taken"

"She should be treated as a commodity, and should be beaten, as she is the root cause of all ills" etc.

Although Islam gives women many rights e.g at the time of marriage, her consent is taken, otherwise marriage is not legally contracted. But in Afghanistan these Islamic teachings are also ignored.The head of the family arranges the marriage of women without seeking their consent.
During war between the tribes, women were exchanged for the dead soldiers. The life for Afghanistan's women was full of hurdles. There are very few women who came forward, sought knowledge, entered the field of politics and have come to be known for their valour in the battlefields.
1)Among these women are, Ms Rabia Balkh: who as the first poetess and acquired high education in persian literature.
2) Jehan Malika was the daughter of Sultan Mehmood Ghaznavi, who was also a poetess in 422 Hijri.
3) Gohar shad Agah was wife of Shah and was known for her active role in politics and social work. She constructed many mosques and schools which include the Gohar Shah mosque of Iran, masjid Gohar Shad Herat, Madressa Dira Herat.
4) Mehri Harvi: was a contemporary poetess of Gohar Shad.
5) Agha Begum was a famous poetess during the period of Sultan Hussain Baiqra, She was the daughter of Amir Jalakeer. She used to encourage the poor poets.

In addition to the above, there are other famous Afghan Women,e.g Shah Jehan Begum, Sanober Aziza, Haleema khushal,Haleema Bubo Jan Ismat Begum, Fatima Sultan, Gohari Kabli, Mehbooba Harvi.
During foreign invasions, the Afghan women played a major role by fighting alongside their men.

Women Of Hazarajat:

The mountainous region in the Central Afghanistan is known as Hazarajat. Here the people are for centuries leading a tribal and feudal life. In 1893 the then prevailing system of Twaful Muki was taken over by the kabul government, but the feudal and the tribal system continued.

Haji Kazim says, "The predicament of women of Hazarajat was more or less like the other women of Afghanistan. However, they enjoyed more respect and domestic responsibilities as compared to other women.

According to Umar Hayat Khan Afghani, "It is amazing that the women of Hazara, though remote from culture and knowledge,

enjoyed more respect and were assigned many important roles, as compared to the women of other societies.

The pressure from the Hazara society and the Islamic teachings have forced the Hazara women to follow their husbands in every possible way. It is not only true for the masses of the Hazaras, but to the families of Khans, Mirs and Arbabs. Cases like Bacon's Aghai of Dai Zangi do arise oncein a while, but it is the man who dominates the Hazara interpersonal relationship between husband and wife. A Hazara mother is expected to fulfil two important roles in the Hazara society: First to raise the children, and second to manage the household affairs.

As time has passed, the position of Hazara women has changed drastically. The Hazara women described by Harlancould not be found in today's Hazara society. There is a noticeable change in the social and mental attitudes of the Hazara men towards their wives.According to Harlan:

The men display a remarkable deference for the opinion on their wives, especially on grave occasions, which impresses a stranger with surprise, when that deference is contrasted with the indifference and contempt usually prevailing among Mohammedans in their treatment and opinion of the sex! The sexes participate in the domestic responsibility and in the labours and pleasures of their conditions. Seclusion of the women is not practised less dependence being placed on bolts and bars for the preservation of female virtue than is allowed to sense of prudence and the influence of honor. They address their wives with the respectful and significant title of Aga, which means master and also mistress, as the word may refer to male or female.They associate with them as equal companions, arrogate no superior pretentions of preemince, consult with them on all occasions, and in weighty matters, when they are not present, defer a conclusion until the opinions of their women can be heard. The women, in fact, are free from temptations, and that fact is a safeguard to chastity no less potent than the force of education.

Harlan further noted that in Hazara society:

"The wife and husband,among the Hazaras are inseparable in public affairs. She sits with her husband in the Davan, dressed like him and booted, ready for the chase of cven a military foray!They would not go upon a distant expedition, but in civil dissentions and in border difficulties, to which their excursions are mostly confined, they generally participate. In the chase both sexes use the fire-lock expertly and accurately. They will gallop their unshod horses over a precipitous deer path, regardless of danger, and bring down the game at full speed. Females of the poor manage the household duties, assist in tending flocks, bringing in thorns, carrying water and all the hard, laborious work.[4]

The women of Mir Arbab (tribal chief) and other influential families participated in certain political affairs by advising on

[4] The HAZARAS P. 281-282.

politics. e.g. Mir Yazdan Bakhsha's wife used to advise him on all matters related to community welfare and politics. She also participated in wars, dressed up as male. And during Arghoon dinesty (   ) bibi zarif Khanum, Mah Begum, Sultan Begum, Khanzada Bagum and BiBi Daulat were known who used to advise in political issues. [5]

LAILA:

Syed Qadam's wife was a very intelligent woman. After her husband's death till her sons grew up, it was she who solved her nations community related problems.

When her husband Syed Qadam who was a tribal chief died, she not only brought up her sons Mir Qadam Naib and Hasan Naib but also advised on the social/community problem.
When Hassan Naib, became the chief, he came to be known as "Hasan Laila" after his mother. He was a brave and powerful chief. He fought bravely in a battle against Amir Abdul Rehman. He came out of the fort and fought bravely. He got killed in the beetle, but he would be remembered by the people of the region.

The fort of Hasan Laila was burnt by the soldiers of Amir Abdul Rehman, its traces/ruminants can still be seen.

Hasan Laila had a sister who also inherited her mother's intellect and maturity.

GUL CHAMAN AGHA:

Was the daughter of Mir Yousaf Baig Sheharistan. In the absence of her father Gul Chaman solved the problems related to the community or politics.

Foreign Invasion and Participation of Women:

During the Foreign Invasions in Afghanistan the women folk remained equipped and also fought against the enemy for the defence of their country. The valour of many women has become almost proverbial. Mohammad Mero's daughter and Syed Ahmad Shah Noor's sister Amma Sanghari was one of the brave fighters. Her real name was Gul Begum but because of her courage and bravery, she came to be known as Amma Sanghari.

During the last years of the rule of Muhammad Mir Amir Habibullah, a war was declared against the nomads. The Amir alongwith his family went up on a mountain. Amma Sanghari grew up in these warlike conditions and was thus familiar with guns ammunition from the very outset.

Her bravery and valour is exemplary. She could use bow and arrow. She participated in wars, alongside her brothers, dressed up as

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[5] Hayat Afghani P. 455-460

male . She married a man named Sahib Jan but whenever it was required she joined her brothers in the battle field.

KUKU KHANUM:

She was the wife of Gulnar Haider Khan shad Noor and was know for her bravery. She belonged to yakawlang. When the enemy attacked, the entire family of saeed Ahemd and Gulnar Haider prepared themselves for deference. Amma ^Sanghari and Kuku Khanum also joined the bowman kuku Khanum was hit by a bullet in her thigh but she pulled it out and bandaged the wound with a piece of cloth without informing the rest. She later said she did not inform the others for fear that they would become panicky in the war field.

ZULIEKHA KHAN:

At Jaghanri Zulekha Khan is Known for her valour. She participated in many wars and came to be known as Zulekha Khan. The title of Khan is only reserved for men, but in this exceptional case she was titled Khan. In the village of Kogab Ghanchi,when the nomads, started killing the villagers, she with a rifle in her hand fought bravely. When she ran out of her ammunition, she with a pair of scissors, continued fighting. Later she was killed.

It has been observed that the women of Hazara resort to suicide when they fail in their defence. When Abdule Rehman's soldiers attached,' 47 women of Hazarajat jumped from a mountain top and died. In another incident, when Amir Abdul Rehman's (1880-1910) soldiers took many women as prisoners and were travelling towards Jaghanri, as this caravan passed by a river, all the women prisoners jumped in the river and died.

WIFE OF MIR YAZDAN BAKSH:

She was the daughter of a Dai Zangi chief whom Mir Yazdan Bakhsh married in order to solidify his authority. She accompanied the Mir on all important occasions and was a woman of extraordinary qualifications and natural powers of mind. She used to put on a masculine robe, and ornament herself with a sword and shield. a bow and arrow, a spear, a dagger, and a matchlock. She appeared in the field of battle with her husband. When Amir Dost Mohammad invited Mir Yazdan Bakhsh to Kabul, his wife, suspicious of the Afghans. accompanied her husband. It was due to her help that the Mir escaped form the Afghan jail.

Burnes in his book, Cabool:A Personal Narrative, mentioned: "There are ahowever, women in this country who have preeminently distinguished themselves by their conjugal devotion: and I should do wrong were I pass over in silence. Aghai, the Lady of Yazdan Bakhsh, a Hazara chief, whom Dost Mohammad Khan detained at Cabool as a bostage. Yazdan Bakhsh urged her to escape from the jail which she effected by changing her attire to that of a man, and dropping from the window of her prison. She then mounted a horse and fled to the Besud country, between Cabool and Bameean.

She was persuaded by two of the Ameer's officers, accompanied by some of her husband's enemies. She was overtaken, her companion was killed but she herself escaped and reached the first fort in her own country, from the walls of which she defied her pursuers, proudly exclaiming, 'This is the land of Yazdan Bakhsh!' ♠

AGHAI NARAG:

About 30 years back Agha Narag lived in a village of Tagao Barg. She is known as Agha Narg. She worked for the welfare of her people. Agha Mohammad Hussain Baig, son of Mir Abrahim Baig's eldest daughter succeeded her father, after his death.Shewas a women of many talents. She received her early education from her village and could barely read and write. The area of Panjao called Nargis, Gargar and Tagabarg, where 100 pairs of oxen were used for ploughing land were all under her rule.

Agha was very kind hearted. She was also know for her bravery and valour like other Amirs she did not inflict physical torture on her masses. On the contrary she desired absolute peace in her area.

The welfare of her people was close to her heart. She used to listen to their problems and would issue instant directives to redress their grievances.

According to her son,

> "My mother was a very kind hearted person. She never burdened or punished anyone beyond his endurance capacity."

At Khurdg Takhta, many government functionaries resided, but it was Agha who solved the problems faced by the people of the area. She died at the age of 60 in 1342 Hijari. Her Younger brother Akbar Khan succeeded her after her death.

ARBAB KHAJAI:

Eighteen years ago, the daughter of She Ali Karbali, Khadija or Arbab Khaji became the Arbab (leader) of "Anda" and village Shatu . She did not belong to a feudal or rich family, but came to be known because of her valour and hospitality.

Due to harsh weather, many travellers stayed at Khajai's on their way to crossing Shatu Pass. She used to entertain them with tea and looked after them. Khajai became famous after one incident. On the other side of Kotal Shahi, a group of nomads had forcibly occupied the area and were also advancing further. Khajai took the armed men of her village and fought against the nomads and defeated them.

She often visited Bamian, to resolve the social issues pertaining to her area. The issues related to peace in the region, politics

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♠ The HAZARAS P. 395

etc, were resolved by her. Once a man killed his wife, the matter was referred to her and it was Khajai who awarded him punishment.

Once in Yakawlang, the government needed donkeys and horses belonging to the people for construction of roads. Khajai raised protest against the government's decision and impressed upon the government to the owners for the animals hired.

According to her son, "I do not know much but I know that the other Mir's of Yakawlang, reported against my mother to the government of Bamian, asking him to proceed against her and arrest her, for it was a matter of shame for them that a woman was known as Arbab."

He further informed that for Shah Zahir'swelcome celebrations, she gathered 60 men and women of the area and decorated a "welcome gate" for the Shah. She also arranged an oxendance(*), whereas the menfolk did not participate otherwise in celebration of such nature.

Besides Mohammad Ali Khajai had 2 more children, but no one could replace Khajai. Mohammad Ali now runs a tea shop near Kotal.

WOMEN LEADERS OF HAZARAJAT

BY:

MOHAMMAD ALI GULZARI